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613 Again if a Nayar of any rank committed treason
687 against the king, the king might order the execution of all members of his property group. Their land escheated to the royal lineage, but apparently no reprisals were made upon the lineage as a whole.

613 In spite of these laws of the kingdom a tradition did persist that
627 the lineage of an offended Nayar had the moral obligation to avenge him (Logan, 1951, I: 169). Folk songs tell of blood feuds (*kudi-paga*) between lineages which apparently neither king nor chief could always quell, although the blood-feud tradition is not nearly so important as in North Malabar, where political centralization had advanced less far. In the central kingdoms feuds between commoner lineages and between village headmen's lineages could be most easily cut short by the higher authorities. Feuds between district chiefs' lineages were harder to quell and sometimes turned into small wars between districts, in which each chief amassed his feudal following behind him (K. M. Panikkar, 1929: 9). However, even in the twentieth
[178] century under the British legal system, protracted estrangements have sometimes existed between two retainer lineages of the same neighborhood, which would periodically break out in armed assaults between representative individuals or even, occasionally, in murder. In recent years inter-lineage conflicts concerning assault and libel have also often been waged in the urban law courts.

Three institutions existed through which kings and chiefs seem to have tried to handle and curtail inter-lineage aggression. During wartime the problem was presumably less acute because the soldiers were away from their villages fighting large battles under their feudal lords. But wars took place only in the dry season; in the monsoons extensive military operations were impossible. Instead, each wet season saw a period of intensive military training in village gymnasia. Intermittently in this season, champions of lineages, of villages, and of chiefdoms went to joust at chiefly and royal palaces for the entertainment of their lords. Thus, first, these occasions may have helped to canalize intersegmentary conflict in a manner conducive to the royal peace.

Second, if a Nayar assaulted another or insulted his lineage, the offended man might challenge him to a duel. On payment of a fee to the chief, each disputant brought one or several champions from his lineage to fight on his behalf. Each pair fought until one or both was wounded or killed. A duel might be postponed as long as twelve years until the two lineages had trained champions to their satisfaction
613 (Logan, 1951, I: 170). Often it was not fought by the original dis-
627 putants. Duels seem to have been fought mainly to avenge the honor
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in her care particular daily tasks in connection with cooking, housework, the pounding of paddy, and the tending of small children. The minimal unit of one woman and her own children, although having a special solidarity emotionally, was given very little recognition in the division of work. Women cooked communally in the kitchen, bathed and washed their own and any children's clothes in company in the bathing pool, and at the harvests moved in household groups to the fields to help the serf women of their families in cutting paddy. Nayar women's agricultural work, however, was subsidiary and they took no part in the more arduous tasks of transplanting and weeding.

The women of a Nayar retainer lineage also owed services to women of the landlord household to which their lineage was attached. Although their lower-caste rank prevented them from touching their mistress or entering her kitchen, they swept the house, accompanied its womenfolk to their bathing pool, and did various household chores. The landlord household normally chose three or four favorites from among the lineages attached to them to perform these services, but women of any retainer household might be summoned during the special preparations for a feast.

Authority and Responsibility Property groups, rather than lineages, were the main legal units within the local caste group. Their kāranavans formed the neighborhood assembly. Within the assembly, a kāranavan acted on behalf of his property group in managing the Nayar temple, settling small civil disputes in his own and lower castes, and adjudicating in cases of offense against Nayar religious law.

A kāranavan also represented his property group in its relations with its feudal lord and with higher authorities of the kingdom. We have seen that the property group and not the lineage held land on tenure from its landlord, and that although a lineage was attached to a landlord by hereditary right, the landlord conducted all economic transactions separately with the head of each property group within it. Similarly, each kāranavan was required to represent his own property group in ceremonial attendance on his village landlord, the chief of his district, or (if he were a direct vassal of the royal lineage) his king, at religious festivals associated with the temples of these dignitaries.

On behalf of his property group, a kāranavan was held legally responsible for his juniors in most types of legal offense. He paid their fines from taravād funds if they were found guilty of petty theft or debt before the village headman or the chief. If a member of the taravād was convicted in the royal court of treason, his kāranavan and

his whole property group might be put to death. Conversely, the property group as a whole was rewarded for extraordinary military valor on the part of one of its members. In a period of conquest of a new district, the king sometimes removed from office recalcitrant village headmen or even chiefs of the enemy side and replaced them with property groups from among his own following. Again, when a soldier died fighting with exceptional bravery, his chief sometimes rewarded his property group with a plot of land held on a special military tenure, under unusually favorable terms.

As we have seen, the property group had the prime responsibility for an individual convicted by the neighborhood assembly of offense against the religious laws of caste.

The kāranavan's day-to-day authority over his juniors was conferred upon him by his feudal lord, backed by the judicial authority of the king. He had the right to command and discipline all junior members. In cases of extreme disobedience he might inflict corporal punishment on the women or children, or cause a junior man of the taravād to do this. He seems to have had the right temporarily to expel from the household and to deny maintenance to junior men who insulted or disobeyed him. As manager of the estate he also had disciplinary rights over the taravād's tenants. In serious matters the tenants had recourse to the village headman, perhaps to the chief, but their own master settled minor disputes among them and fined them for small offenses. In law a kāranavan appears to have had complete rights of life and death over his property group's serfs. A very few cases are recorded of his exercising it to the full. More common are the stories of extraordinary loyalty between serf and master, especially of serfs who died fighting to defend their lords' homes. Their spirits were rewarded with a place in the taravād's ancestral shrine.

It is clear that whatever his *de jure* authority, the kāranavan's *de facto* authority was greater over women and children than over junior men, who were often absent on military service. It seems probable that at these times soldiers came under the direct legal control of officers of the kingdom and that in at least some contexts their property groups were not held responsible for them. We know for example that if a Nayar soldier murdered another he was tried in the court of the king or of a feudatory prince and, if convicted, was executed promptly by four or five of his peers, presumably without his property group being consulted or punished. Thieves caught within the boundaries of coastal towns seem to have been similarly dealt with (Barbosa, 1518, quoted in Ayyar, 1938: 284–286). It may be that their

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and the Rajas were mostly guided by their own will and pleasure unless it ran counter to the customs of the country. Many of them had learned Brahmans to instruct them in the fundamental and long established laws of the country.

Certain checks upon their arbitrary power existed in the form of general assemblies of the nation, but these were seldom held. These were of two kinds: those assembled under the orders of the Raja, and those assembled by the spontaneous will of the people. In the former case, messengers, who by right of birth and descent were entitled to that office, were despatched in all directions to summon the people. When assembled, they sat in a circle in the open air, while a number of Nayars kept guard over them. The propositions were then discussed, and the measures proposed were rejected or adopted by the unanimous silence or clamour of those present, but in affairs of minor importance not affecting the welfare of the whole community, the chiefs of the nation were summoned, and they decided the questions laid before them.

The assemblies summoned by the will of the nation were conducted in much the same manner, but with more impetuosity. They were held only in cases of emergency, when the Raja was guilty of extreme tyranny or of gross violation of the law. Then all the landed proprietors were bidden to attend, and if any one dared to refuse to obey the summons, the assembly sentenced his houses, gardens or estates to be devastated. If he persisted in his disobedience, he would be deprived of his privileges and votes, and might even be sentenced to banishment. As the object of such assemblies was to thwart the will of the ruler, he on his side did all he could to obstruct their holding such assemblies. The Raja had no right nor power to prevent them by force of arms, but he sent *Pandara Patti* (servants of the rulers) to provoke them with all manner of annoyances and to pelt them with stones, sand, and dirt. The Nayars on guard did their best to keep off the assailants with their shields, and, if any one of them, provoked beyond endurance, were to strike or hurt one of the youths, it would be regarded as treason, and, as such, the assembly would be liable to a heavy fine and would be deprived of its inviolability. The Raja might then disperse them by force of arms; but if he failed to subdue them, they would all desert their allegiance. Allies and neighbours did their best to intercede between the parties and to secure for everyone his proper